

[*The question-and-answer session concluded.*]

The President. I agree with that. Let me say to all of you, one of the things in our budget this year, in addition to our efforts to connect all the schools and libraries, is funds to set up 1,000 community centers in poor rural communities, Native American reservations, and relatively isolated urban neighborhoods, so that it will, by definition, build social capital if you have community centers where people can come and access the net, with people there who are trained to help people use it who otherwise

would never use it. I think it can make a big difference.

Well, we stayed an hour late, but it was certainly interesting. I think you did a great job, and I thank you all for your patience.

Thank you for being here today. It was great.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert Putnam, Stanfield Professor of International Peace in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the participants.

Statement on Signing the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century

April 5, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1000, the “Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century.” This legislation contains important measures to improve aviation safety, increase airline competition, protect air travelers with disabilities, and boost assistance for the families of victims of aviation disasters. The bill also takes an additional step toward our long-term objectives for modernizing and reforming the FAA’s provision of critical air traffic control services.

I call on Congress to join me in moving forward to further system-wide reform of air traffic

control. While this legislation seeks to provide substantial funding guarantees for airport construction and other capital investment, I remain concerned about the possible effect of the bill’s procedural requirements on future appropriations for air traffic control and other crucial safety functions funded by the FAA’s Operations account. My administration will work with the Congress to achieve more balanced funding of aviation programs in fiscal year 2001.

NOTE: H.R. 1000, approved April 5, was assigned Public Law No. 106–181.

Statement on Signing the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century

April 5, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1000, the “Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century.” Several of the broad, fundamental improvements in aviation safety supported by Senator Ford are contained in this legislation. It is particularly satisfying to see the Congress bestow this recognition on such an outstanding advocate of U.S. aviation.

Since the last major aviation law was enacted in 1996, both my Administration and the Congress have committed significant time and resources to bring about a new era for aviation. I remember well my trip to the Boeing plant in Washington State in 1993 to signal our concern for the renewal of an industry then facing very difficult economic times. The subsequent

focus by this Administration on flexible solutions—from the Open Skies agreements we have negotiated worldwide to the “free flight” rules in the safety and air traffic area—has combined with the Nation’s truly impressive economic performance to make this industry a winner.

This bill contains many new provisions to advance aviation safety. Of particular note is the inclusion of the “Aircraft Safety Act of 1999,” which my Administration proposed to help stop the indefensible practice of manufacturing, distributing, and installing fraudulently represented, nonconforming aircraft parts. Several significant provisions to provide “whistleblower” protections to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and air industry employees, to close a potential loophole in the prosecution of hazardous materials cases, and to combat “air rage” incidents in flight, will also address real safety concerns we face today.

In addition, the bill builds on the reforms proposed by my Administration and enacted in 1995, and represents an additional step toward our long-term objectives of modernization and stability of the FAA’s critical air traffic services. However, we have yet to achieve fundamental structural reform of the FAA. Toward that end, I recently directed the FAA to report back to me at the end of April with options for achieving broader reforms. While I applaud the Congress for the management reforms already provided, I call upon the Congress to join me in moving forward to further system-wide reform of air traffic services.

Although this legislation seeks to provide substantial funding guarantees for airport construction and other capital investment, it jeopardizes funding for safety. I remain concerned about the possible effect of H.R. 1000’s procedural requirements on appropriations for air traffic control and other crucial safety functions funded by the FAA’s Operations account. The bill mandates unnecessarily large increases for FAA capital spending under the budget caps, thereby making it more difficult to fund other discretionary programs, especially transportation programs such as FAA Operations, Amtrak, and the Coast Guard. Because the bill also limits the ability of the appropriators to reallocate aviation-related capital spending to meet more pressing operational needs within the FAA, the bill creates an extra hurdle to fully funding the amounts authorized and required for FAA operations. My Administration will work with the

Congress to achieve more balanced funding of aviation programs in Fiscal Year 2001.

Moreover, certain provisions of this legislation must be interpreted and applied in a manner that avoids violating the constitutional separation of powers. While I applaud the new focus that the oversight subcommittee established by H.R. 1000 will bring to bear on FAA air traffic services, neither the subcommittee’s authorities nor the “for cause” removal protection for its members may be construed to grant it discretion to block significant executive branch policies and directions, particularly to the extent those policies bear on the interrelationship between civilian and military aviation and on the conduct of foreign affairs. Similarly, because the bill provides for the appointment of the Chief Operating Officer in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of the Appointments Clause of the Constitution, the Administrator will be unable to delegate to the Chief Operating Officer those responsibilities that properly may be exercised only by an “Officer” of the United States within the meaning of the Constitution. Finally, in light of my authority to make recommendations to the Congress and to control negotiations and diplomacy in the field of foreign affairs, I must reserve the authority to revise executive branch budget requests before they are submitted to the Congress and to enter into only those negotiations with foreign states and international organizations that I believe appropriate.

This new law also includes an important legislative advance for air travelers with disabilities. My Administration proposed the extension of protections in domestic travel to travel on foreign carriers, along with higher penalties for violations, and I commend the Congress for providing such protections—and for making protections of other civil rights explicit in domestic air travel. Aviation consumers will benefit in other areas as well. For example, the bill increases funding for enforcement of air traveler safeguards, such as those prohibiting deceptive advertising and those providing denied boarding protection. The bill also improves the “family assistance” provisions enacted in 1996 and 1997 to comfort those with friends or family involved in an aviation disaster.

I am also pleased that Title VIII of this legislation codifies the recommendations of the National Parks Overflights Working Group on regulating air tours over national parks. These provisions represent a consensus approach to minimizing the impact of commercial air tours on the natural and cultural resources in national parks.

As proposed by my Administration, substantial changes are included in H.R. 1000 to increase airline competition. Certainly one of the most significant is an end to the “slots” rules that restrict access to O’Hare, LaGuardia, and John F. Kennedy International airports. The restrictions will be eased almost immediately, and then ended completely in 2002 in Chicago and in 2007 in New York City. This Act also substantially achieves a second Administration proposal to enhance competition. We proposed allowing a \$2 increase in the current \$3-per-segment Passenger Facility Charge, with a condition that a “dominated hub” airport provide a competition plan that lays out how new entrants and other

competing carriers can be included in the airport facility plans. This bill includes the requirement for a competition plan and a \$1.50 increase. Because effective competition has not worked as well on lightly traveled routes (with resulting high fares), we endorsed the Senate’s rural air service pilot program that is substantially adopted in this Act.

This legislation provides benefits to passengers and the aviation community, and represents a first step toward our long-term objectives for modernization and stability of FAA’s critical air traffic control services. I thank the Members of Congress who led the 3-year effort to enact this bill, and I am pleased to sign it into law.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
April 5, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 1000, approved April 5, was assigned Public Law No. 106–181.

Statement on the Conclusion of the Independent Counsel’s Investigation of Alexis Herman

April 5, 2000

I am very pleased to learn that Independent Counsel Ralph Lancaster has concluded his investigation. Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman has for many years served our Nation with selfless dedication and extraordinary talent. She did not deserve what she has had to endure over the past many months. As I said at the start of this inquiry, nearly 2 years ago, Secretary

Herman did nothing wrong. But throughout it all, she was never deterred from her mission: making life better for America’s working families. I am proud to call her my friend, and I am honored that she has been willing to work in this administration on behalf of working people everywhere.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Hazardous Materials Transportation

April 5, 2000

To the Congress of the United States:

I herewith transmit the Department of Transportation’s Biennial Report on Hazardous Materials Transportation for Calendar Years 1996–1997. The report has been prepared in accord-

ance with the Federal hazardous materials transportation law, 49 U.S.C. 5121(e).

WILLIAM J. CLINTON